

Iowa Current Developments

Photo by Jeff Vanuga



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USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
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A Message from the: State Conservationist



*Rich Sims,
State Conservationist*

do best.

Spring is almost here! We will have a few more opportunities for snow, but Punxsutawney Phil said just six more weeks.

Many federal employees are watching the budget discussions taking place in Congress, with earnest.

We have experienced this in the past and it is our job to keep focused on the ball – the conservation ball. We will have customers wanting service to address many resource concerns, and that is what we

So, remember what Secretary Vilsack said in his last e-mail to us, and let's have a productive, fun and rewarding spring.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Sims". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

"Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service: Excellence in helping people conserve and improve our natural resources, communities and environment."

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Onawa Post Office: Features 'Soil Erosion and Control' Mural

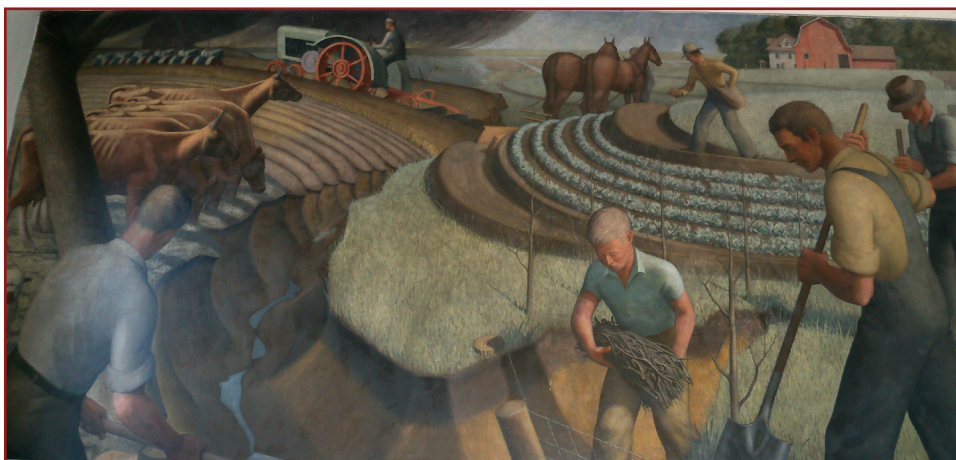
Since 1938 the Post Office in Onawa has displayed a mural with a topic near and dear to our hearts, entitled, "Soil Erosion and Control."

The mural, by native Iowan Lee Allen, "reflects the then post master's belief...that then-current problems related to mechanized farming, and that return to draft animals would cure the problems," according to documents provided by the post office.

The left side of the mural is symbolic of the causes of erosion – a man chopping down a tree represents de-forestation; lean cattle and sheep in the dry, cracked pasture represent overgrazing; while overplanting and improper farming methods are also shown.

On the right side of the mural, a boy builds a brush dam, men plant trees and sow seed, and contour plowing and terracing demonstrate effective farming methods in the control of erosion.

Allen, who was born in Muscatine in 1910, later moved to Des Moines and graduated from East High



The "Soil Erosion and Control" mural by Lee Allen was completed in 1938. According to post office documents, Lee visited the post office in the 1980s while on vacation to take a look at his work. In 1988, the mural was cleaned and sealed by an art conservator from Wisconsin. (Photo by Kathy Schneider)

School in 1928. He studied with Grant Wood after completing his studies at the University of Iowa. Allen assisted Grant Wood in two sets of murals in the library at Iowa State University.

In addition to the Onawa Post Office mural, Allen executed the mural in the Emmetsburg Post Office in 1937. These murals were carried out under a Section of Fine Arts program, which decorated Federal buildings with murals and sculptures.

Thank you to Roger Link for suggesting this story.

Public Affairs: Let Us Tell Your Story

Do you have a project you are particularly proud of? Is there a project that is unique you think others should know about? Is there a producer in your county who is going the extra mile to protect the natural resources on his or her farm? Maybe it should be highlighted in the Iowa NRCS Conservation Showcase.

The public affairs team can take Iowa NRCS successes and market

them statewide or even nationally.

For years, Iowa NRCS public affairs has been telling the story of conservation success in our state, through storytelling, education and images.

If you are interested in having a member of the public affairs team visit your county to meet with a producer and take pictures

for an article, call Laura Greiner or Jason Johnson at 515-284-4262 or e-mail either one of us.

If you haven't worked with the public affairs team, visit the Iowa NRCS Conservation Showcase at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/successstories/showcase.html to see how your conservation success could be a Showcase article.

Toolkit Support: Cadres Formed to Assist Local Users

Iowa NRCS recently established a Toolkit Cadre to better assist local users when they encounter problems in conservation plan documentation.

According to Jon Hubbert, assistant state conservationist for operations, cadre members should be the primary contact for field offices when a technical problem is encountered. "If the Toolkit Cadre member cannot resolve the issue," he says, "the Cadre member will contact other Cadre members or the State Office for additional assistance."

As a group, Cadre members were asked to draft instructions, help sheets, and guidance documents. Members will field test instructions prior to their distribution to field offices.

Please contact a Toolkit Cadre member from your area if you encounter problems, have questions, or have recommendations on how to make sure the use of Toolkit is more efficient.

Toolkit Cadre Members

Area 1

Dan Paulsen
Ann Byers
Jeremy Viles

Area 3

Jered Finley
Elizabeth Rachut
Katherine Timmerman

Area 5

Shawn Dettmann
Sarah Ham
Stacy Schlader

Area 2

Teresa Thomas
Aaron Anderson
Jaia Fischer

Area 4

Kevin Kuhn
Scott Eischeid
Shane McNaughton

State Office

Jennifer Dubendorf
Don Carrington
Judy Martinson

NEST: Assuring Easement Accuracy



The Iowa NRCS State Office Easement Team, Area Easement Specialists, and various other employees across the state have spent countless hours reviewing more than 1,000 easements and entering data into the National Easement Staging Tool (NEST). Easement Specialist Joanne Bruce (pictured) says the review process is complete, but she and other Easement Team members will spend many more hours entering data. The process is to ensure all easement data on the national database is accurate. (Photo by Laura Greiner)

Partner News:

Iowa Learning Farm/ PFI

Cover Crops Workshop

Iowa Learning Farms (ILF) and Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) will co-host a workshop focusing on cover crops at the Clay County Regional Events Center, Spencer, on Thurs., March 10, from 9:30 to Noon. The workshop is free and open to the public, and includes a free lunch.

An RSVP is requested. Please call the Clay County Extension Office at 712-262-2264 to register for the workshop. Visit www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf for more details.

Area 4 Meeting: Conservation Jeopardy Highlights Event

(Right) Randy Cooney from IDALS-DSC hosted the conservation Jeopardy games Jan. 27 at the Area 4 meeting in Creston. Participants answered questions about NRCS history, conservation programs, designing practices, and more.



(Left) Logan Soil Conservationist Weston Dittmer checks out a display during lunch at the Area 4 meeting.

Area 5 Meeting: Celebrating Federal Service



NRCS employees in Area 5 hold certificates signifying their years of service milestone. (From left): Bruce Trautman, Asst. State Conservationist for Field Operations, Fairfield (30 years); Craig Scott, Engineering Technician, Ottumwa (20 years); Ruth Izer, Soil Conservationist, Iowa City (20 years); Tammy Eakins, Soil Conservation Technician, Bloomfield (20 years); Doug Morningstar, Area Engineer, Williamsburg (30 years); Bruce Van Laere, District Conservationist, DeWitt/Davenport (30 years); Doug Johnson, Resource Conservationist, DeWitt/Davenport (30 years); Merlin Bueltel, Soil Conservationist, Ottumwa (30 years); and Rich Sims, State Conservationist, Des Moines (30 years).

4Rs: Right for Nutrient Stewardship

NRCS is encouraging Iowa agricultural producers to adopt the 4R nutrient stewardship concept to help define the right source, rate, time, and place for plant nutrient application.

John Myers, state resource conservationist, says the 4R concept considers productivity, profitability, cropping system durability, and a healthy environment. "The approach is simple and universally applicable," says Myers. "Apply the correct nutrient in the amount needed, time and place to meet crop demand."

The 4Rs will change and improve with new gains in knowledge and technology development, says Iowa NRCS Nutrient Management Specialist Eric Hurley. "The 4Rs provide flexibility to nutrient management," he says, "depending on soils, climate, crops, cropping history, management style, and farm size."

Breaking Down the 4Rs

Right Source

The right source means matching the right fertilizer product with soil properties and crop needs. Hurley says it's important to balance applications of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and other nutrients according to crop needs and available soil nutrients. "Take care to address all nutrient needs in your fertilizer plan," he says. "Nitrogen is wasted if inadequate P or K is stunting your crop."

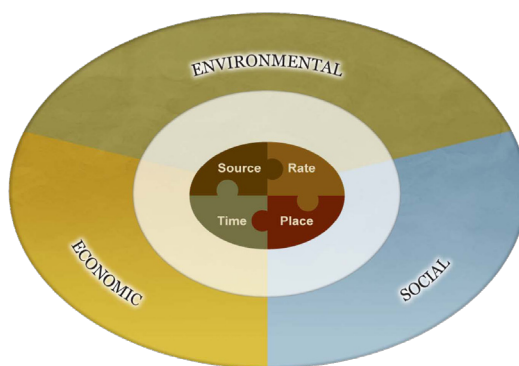
Hurley also recommends taking time to review the forms and formulations that best fit your

management and the needs of your crops.

Right Rate

The right rate means matching application rates with crop requirements. Hurley says soil testing, crop history, in-season testing, and crop nutrient budgets will impact application rates. "Time and money can be saved by applying only the nutrients needed to optimize your production," he says.

State Agronomist Barb Stewart says to test soil for P, K and micro-nutrient availability. "Use the Iowa State University N-Rate Calculator's MRTN rate to determine your nitrogen needs," she says.



Right Time

The right time means synchronizing nutrient availability with crop demand. Hurley recommends applying N fertilizer in the spring, and encourages producers to look at split applications of nitrogen.

Controlled release fertilizers and urease and nitrification inhibitors are designed to manipulate the timing of nutrient availability. "As research demonstrates the effectiveness of these products, they may become important tools in

improving fertilizer efficiency," says Hurley.

Right Place

The right place means placing and keeping nutrients where the crop can get to them and where nutrient use efficiency will be maximized. Crops, cropping systems, and soil properties will dictate the most appropriate method of placement. "Injection or incorporation is usually preferred to keep nutrients in place and to increase their use efficiency," says Hurley, "though this soil disturbance needs to be balanced with your soil erosion control goals."

Stewart says cropping systems such as strip-till place the nutrients close to the developing plant to insure its availability. "Less fertilizer is lost to the environment this way compared to broadcasting fertilizer across the field," she says.

According to Myers, deciding the best application, method of placement or best nutrient source must be site-specific. "Research supports the 4Rs, but stakeholders such as farmers, fertilizer companies, natural resource specialists, and crop advisers must help decide what is the right or best nutrient management practice," he says.

The 4R system will be officially endorsed by USDA-NRCS in the new 590 Nutrient Management Standard. "The 4R concept is gaining acceptance, but continued education and dialog between all stakeholders is needed to keep it moving forward," says Myers.

Changes In: NRCS Personnel

In order of Effective Date

Name	Title	Effective Date	Nature of Action	Location
Hurford, Thomas	Area Resource Con.	12/31/10	Retirement	Area 4 AO - Atlantic
La Van, Mark	Soil Scientist	12/31/10	Retirement	Fairfield Soils
McGinty, Erin	Soil Conservation Tech.	12/31/10	Resignation	Rockwell City
Stone, Norman	Soil Conservation Tech.	12/31/10	Retirement	Wapello
Lensch, Richard	Soil Scientist	1/1/11	Retirement	Atlantic Soils
Ranum, James	Soil Conservationist	1/1/11	Retirement	Elkader
Martinson, Judy	Soil Conservationist	1/2/11	Reassignment	S.O. - Eco. Sci. Staff
Hammerly, John	Soil Scientist	1/16/11	Reassignment	Atlantic Soils
Lohafer, Andrea	Soil Conservationist	1/16/11	Last Name Change from Blong	Sergeant Bluff
Phillips, Sandra	Soil Conservation Tech.	1/16/11	Promotion	Clarinda
Adams, Sam	Soil Conservationist	1/30/11	Reassignment	Fort Dodge
Chase, Patrick	Soil Scientist	1/30/11	Promotion	Area 2 AO - Ft. Dodge
Kuhn, Kevin	Area Resource Con.	1/30/11	Reassignment	Area 4 AO - Atlantic
Fitzgerald, William	Soil Conservationist	2/13/11	Promotion	Kahului, HI
Sutter, James	Soil Conservationist	4/10/11	Reassignment	Kealahakua, HI

Changes In: IDALS-DSC Personnel

Name	Title	Nature of Action	Location
Martin, James	Environmental Specialist, Regional Basin Coordinator, Water Resources Bureau	Transfer	Fairfield Area Office
Asberry, Sarah	Program Planner, Water Resources Bureau	New Hire	Des Moines
Greenlees, Wallace (Wally)	Environmental Engineer, Mines & Minerals Bureau	New Hire	Des Moines
Kuennen, Robert (Bobby)	Environmental Specialist, Mines & Minerals Bureau	New Hire	Des Moines
Coffelt, Todd	Chief, Mines & Minerals Bureau and Water Resources Bureau	Reassignment	Des Moines

Current Developments Stories and Photos

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Greiner at laura.greiner@ia.usda.gov.

Current Developments is published six times per year. Past issues can be found at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/currentdevelopments.html.